

Minutes
King County Rural Forest Commission
April 9, 2003
Preston Community Center

Commissioners present: Jean Bouffard, Bill Kombol, Ken Konigsmark, Fred McCarty, Doug McClelland, Dave Warren

Commissioners absent: Gordon Bradley, Rudy Edwards, Steve Ketz, Matt Mattson

Exofficio members: Mike Reed

Staff: Bill Loeber, Kristi McClelland, Linda Vane, Benj Wadsworth

Guests: Dennis Dart, Kirk Hanson, Joel Kuperberg

Doug McClelland called the meeting to order at 10:00 am.

Staff Report

Benj commented that there are several members of the Commission that need to be re-appointed; Gordon Bradley, Rudy Edwards, Steve Ketz, Ken Konigsmark, Doug McClelland and David Warren. The Executive has transmitted his recommendation to appoint Dennis Dart and should transmit a recommendation for Lee Kahn soon. Benj suggested that it may be possible to use all of the appointments and re-appointments as an opportunity to update Council about forestry issues. Mike Reed commented that the Natural Resources, Parks and Open Space Committee might have some time in the next few months to entertain this – possibly in mid-May. Benj commented that the seat for the “consumer end of forest products” is still vacant, and he is looking to fill it. Several people suggested talking to some of the local lumber retailers.

Regarding the CAO, there will be a second public review draft in mid-September, with the plan to transmit it to Council in December. Benj distributed a draft of the letter from the RFC. He will send it to Daryl Grigsby and Stephanie Warden soon.

Benj still needs financial disclosure forms from a couple of the Commissioners.

Benj responded to Bill Kombol’s e-mail expressing concern that landowners do not receive a tax benefit in the PBRs program when they set aside land that is already unbuildable due to sensitive area regulations. According to Ted Sullivan, manager of the PBRs program, it is clear in the literature about the program that this is the case. The County has never provided a

financial incentive for following the law. Bill commented that he does not feel that it is clear that this is the case. Discussion ensued about the possibility of granting a tax incentive for everyone that has to abide by the proposed 65% forest cover regulation in the CAO. Doug commented that this is a very complex issue, and he would like to delve into it in greater detail at a future meeting.

Benj gave an update on the Conservation Futures application process. The Forestry program has decided to apply for funding to acquire development rights on two of the qualified TDR sending sites: the Kahn's 30-acre tree farm near North Bend and 150 acres in the Rock Creek Valley owned by Robert Striker. Also, Kirk Anderson, the Snoqualmie Basin Steward is submitting an application for the inholdings in the Marckworth Forest. These properties are also of interest to the Forestry Program. Ken commented that the Council had earmarked a substantial amount of the CFT budget this year. There is \$3.7 million left to be distributed. The Citizen Oversight Committee will be reviewing proposals for both 2003 and 2004. Doug suggested that it is important to show how these properties are part of the bigger picture. He also suggested giving each property a name.

2003 Work Program

Benj distributed a draft list of nine priorities that were mentioned at the March meeting.

Doug suggested choosing the top 2 or 3 projects that the RFC would like to accomplish in 2003.

Ken suggested the need to monitor and comment on Council initiatives/actions.

Jean suggested the need to develop a plan to improve public outreach. Benj commented that the forestry staff met yesterday and discussed the need for an education plan. He suggested that the plan be discussed at the May meeting. Staff has advertised the FON slideshow through mailings and newspaper articles, but there has not been a great response. The brochure will be published very soon. Jean commented that she thinks the brochure will be very helpful. She suggested sending it out to all of the science teachers in the County.

Doug commented that the RFC should continue to provide input to the Forestry team's work program.

Dennis Dart commented that the RFC should not try to accomplish too much. There are nine items on the list – it needs to be narrowed down, not expanded.

Bill Kombol commented that the issue of County regulation of forestland platted after 1960 needs to be addressed. He added that the RFC should think about their ability to effect change – it makes more sense to focus on County-level issues rather than federal initiatives.

Ken suggested that there is a lot of work that will be reactive to external actions, so there needs to be time to focus on unexpected issues that arise.

Mike Reed suggested that the RFC needs to develop a vision for what forestry ought to look like in KC. Doug responded that the RFC developed a mission statement early on in their existence. They also provided a lot of input to the development of the Executive Order implementing forestry policies. Benj commented that while it is helpful to refer to the Farm and Forest Report and the Executive Order, he feels that those documents should be adaptive rather than restrictive. There are suggestions in both that will likely become low priorities due to significant obstacles, and there may also be good ideas that are not suggested in either document but are worth pursuing.

Dennis Dart commented that he thinks the concept of a local wood marketing campaign has a great deal of potential. There is nowhere for local forest landowners to send their wood right now. He feels that there is a real need for a small mill.

Ken commented that visuals are an important tool for getting the ear of decision-makers. He suggested that developing a list and map of the key threatened small forest landowners is important.

Doug commented that the RFC should continue to be involved in the management of County-owned land. He feels the RFC plays an important role in educating County staff outside the Forestry Program. He thinks the RFC should address the management of the Polygon 4-to-1 property as a means to educate staff.

Mike Reed commented on the need to support the Vashon Coop. He feels that it is a novel and creative approach, and it has the potential to address some of the concerns mentioned earlier regarding the lack of infrastructure to support forestry.

Benj commented that he would like the discussion to move beyond listing priorities and onto implementation. He is seeking input from the RFC as to how staff should go about accomplishing some of the recommendations mentioned today.

Doug summarized that four distinct efforts have been mentioned: addressing the problems with the PBRs/Timber program and lands platted after 1960, identifying the most threatened small forestlands, addressing management of the Polygon 4-to-1 property, and supporting the Vashon

Forest Coop and other citizen efforts. He suggested that the first step is for the RFC to educate itself by inviting the right people to meetings and possibly going out on the ground. Once the issues are better understood, the RFC can develop an action plan and move forward.

Fred McCarty suggested the need to develop a list of all of the forest landowners and know which ones are resident landowners and which do not live on their land.

Benj commented that the RFC has not suggested focusing on the development of a strategic plan or on conducting a field trip for Council members or other decision-makers, both suggestions that have been discussed in previous meetings. Jean suggested inviting members of the press on a field trip. Doug feels that a field trip is important and that the RFC should pick a date soon.

Benj will put a timeline together to carry out the priorities and develop his recommendations as to how to implement the suggested actions.

Mike Reed commented that the NRPOS Committee will be addressing the budget proviso regarding the PBRs program and the ORRP section in general at a June meeting.

Local Wood Marketing

Kirk Hanson introduced himself. He works in the Small Forest Landowners Office at WADNR. He is working with a forest coop in Lewis County. Joel Kuperberg also introduced himself. He is with the Vashon Forest Stewards, who are trying to start a forest coop on Vashon.

Kirk gave an overview of the coop effort in Lewis County. They received a grant from the USDA rural business service to do a feasibility study for a forest coop in Lewis County. The study is based on three questions. Is their landowner interest? Are there markets for local wood products? Is there an organization that can serve as the facilitator of a coop, and what type of organization should it be? In order to organize the fragmented landscape of small landowners, there is a need for a database – a sort of “virtual sort yard” that would keep track of what’s available on the stump. In Lewis County, there are appx. 140,000 acres in the 20 – 5000 acre range. He suggested researching the Western Upper Peninsula Forest Improvement District (in Michigan). In 1986, they started out as a government organization that evolved into a non-profit.

Bill Kombol commented that he thinks that the only way a coop can work is if there is additional value added to the product that more than covers the cost of running the coop. Kirk responded

that one benefit of a coop is that landowners can pool their timber and generate market leverage that way. Also, a coop enables landowners to grade their timber and select out the premium grades for niche markets. One challenge with value-added is overcapitalizing. A number of coops in the mid-west have gone bankrupt because they poured too much into capital. There are many ways to work out a membership system to ensure that there is equity between large and small landowners. Another challenge is the perception among consulting foresters that a coop is a source of competition. One possibility is to look at the whole forestry industry in a given region and try to connect all of the pieces.

Benj suggested that maybe a coop does not have to be an integral part of a local wood marketing program. Rather, the focus could be on linking up forest landowners with consumers. Dennis commented that buyers have to provide enough inventory to keep a mill running at maximum output, so they are always looking two months down the road. Bill Kombol commented that consulting foresters already serve the role of working with multiple landowners to provide inventory for a mill.

Dennis Dart commented that the coop presents some unique opportunities for small (20 – 100 acres) landowners, but it is not as attractive to larger landowners. David Warren commented that the Vashon Stewards have had far more success by billing themselves as “stewards” rather than as a coop that is focused on producing and marketing timber. Kirk commented that there is a model in Vermont called Vermont Family Forests that provides management services for landowners and seeks out niche markets for finished products. Their model is more in line with the “local wood marketing” campaign. The Lewis County coop has been exploring the feasibility of a “Washington wood is good” campaign. The LEED sustainable building program provides points for using materials that are produced locally. Dennis commented that there would need to be a chain of custody, and many mills import timber from out of state to provide their inventory. It would be difficult to set up a chain-of-custody.

Ken commented that most of the public is still against timber harvest, and a “local wood is good” campaign could backfire.

To summarize, Benj asked for input as to whether or not there is potential for a successful local wood campaign. Should staff take it to the next step? Consensus is that the concept should be explored further, and the presentation on the Vashon Coop at the May meeting could include more discussion on this topic.

Kirk suggested that the group form a subcommittee to discuss this further. Dave Warren, Kirk, Dennis Dart, Fred McCarty and Mike Reed volunteered to participate.

Minutes Approval

Motion 1-403 “To adopt the March 19, 2003 minutes as written.” Moved, seconded and approved.

Next meeting

Wednesday, May 14, 10:00 – 12:00, Preston Community Center. Agenda to include presentations about WADNR Small Landowner Office and Vashon Forest Stewards.